Band students learn music and culture on trip

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For a student to learn the music of another culture is always intriguing, but to perform it in the very country where that culture evolved is even more so. That is precisely what happened when a group of Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) Band students travelled to Trinidad and performed as part of the steel band.

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“The idea to create it was the brainchild of our former director, Prof. Dan Smithiger,” said Ellen Gale, executive director of the Clayton Chamber of Commerce. “Businesses and restaurants saw an increase in sales and traffic, and those in attendance had a blast! “Entertainment for the 31st season of Parties in the Park is confirmed and is sure to keep party-goers moving and growing all summer long. This year’s music lineup includes: May 14 – Redflag, sponsored by Geoireland; June 11 – Pistachio, sponsored by Lighthouse; June 18 – K-Dude, sponsored by The Thirsty Bear; July 16 – The VCBs, sponsored by Mueller Pest; August 13 – The VCBs, sponsored by Mueller Pest; September 10 – Grinkle and the Gangsters; September 24 – The Wheelhouse and Midwest States Bank.

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College Talk

"I don't know why we went and we played and that was really cool," Browning said. "But they all kind of knew when to stop and when to start and I personally knew a couple of local people who knew how it works because I was there the last time it was like it already had friends waiting for me. And yet we got to play a lot more songs together than we got to play when we were just competing with them on a stage. Playing here is great, but when you go there it is to completely different atmosphere." For others, like Haji-Sheikh, the trip was a broader experience that went beyond the music.

"Down in Trinidad it is obviously a slightly different culture, but there are obvious parallels," Haji-Sheikh said. "I went to a public high school here we have big bands that start from the lower grades up in the grade and that's something they don't have in Trinidad. When you play then going down there and participating in that is a totally new experience. A lot of the approach things are the same, with the exception of the fact that you don't have the American style of our high schools. There is not a lot of paper involved. Mostly you just play, and if you lead someone you are expected to pick it up by ear," he said. From the simplicity of the instruments in a steel band, one wonders if they could be introduced to children. "Definitely," said Cowan. "We did that over the summer at the percussion camp that I helped with. It is difficult to teach them because the drums are so mal- leable, you hit it and it changes pitch. So it is hard to teach them how to play them. But you can see the note they want to look for and how it changes pitch and get them off to a head start and it make the connection.

Aldeamoro Romero Jr. is the Dean of the College of Business Administration at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. The show is presented by The Intelligencer and is supported by the SIUE Center for International Studies and the Office of the Provost. It is taped at College Colle, SIU Edwards.